

PRAYER UPDATE FROM ISRAEL (May 31, 2011)



Cloud over the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem

1. LATTER RAINS AND STORMS: “THE ROD, HIS LAND, LOVINGKINDNESS”.

“Then the LORD will be seen over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord GOD will blow the shofar, and go with whirlwinds from the south. The LORD of Armies will defend them...Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain. The LORD will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, Grass in the field for everyone” (Zechariah 9:14-15a; 10:1).

“Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thundering of His pavilion? Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea. For by these he judges peoples...He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightening. They turn around and around by His guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world. Whether for correction, or for his land, or for love, He causes it to happen” (Job 36:29-31a; 37:11b-13 (ESV); Emphases ours.).

We were awakened Saturday morning by rain on the roof. For most of the morning it continued...a soft sifting rain, with occasional thunder and lightning and one short downpour. What made this so remarkable is that usually the “latter rains” are over by around the tenth of May; no more precipitation until late October. Yet here on *the 28th of May*, only four days before *Jerusalem Day* (1 June, commemorating reunification of the city in 1967), there was a sweet rain falling over all of Jerusalem.

Six days earlier on the other side of the world the elements of nature manifest in a frightfully different way. A frightful tornado tore through Joplin, Missouri, the deadliest to strike the United States in 60 years of keeping records. In its aftermath, over 140 dead, at least 5,000 houses and apartment buildings destroyed—death, desolation, hopelessness and bewilderment—*“When Everything is Gone, Including a Sense of Direction”*, read a *New York Times* article on the tragedy a week later.

A little less than a month before there had been an even greater outbreak. Within a four-day period at least 300 tornadoes roared across the southern and eastern States, resulting in more than 300 deaths (at least 210 in Alabama alone), hundreds of injuries, leaving in their wake vast wastelands of almost total destruction. Many of these were monster storms, some ½ mile wide at their bases.

On Sunday President Obama visited Joplin; it was his third time in around a month to visit Americans in an area ravaged by natural disaster: Tuscaloosa, Alabama in late April after category EF5 tornadoes wreaked havoc there; Memphis two weeks later, when the Mississippi River had released catastrophic flooding across large areas of the country; now Joplin, 1/3rd of which had disappeared. *“The question that weighs on us at a time like this is: Why?”* said President Obama during his visit on Sunday. He went on to say that such natural disasters are *“beyond our power to control...But that does not mean we are powerless in the face of adversity. How we respond when the storm strikes is up to us. How we live in the aftermath of tragedy and heartache, that’s within our control.”*

With such enormous destruction and suffering, our hearts must first of all reach to *Elohim Ha'im*—the Life God; *Av ha'Rachamim*—the Father of Tender Mercies; *Elohei-kol Neshama*—The God of All Comfort. May we allow His Holy Spirit to draw our hearts to pray for those who are wounded, for vast numbers of innocent people who have lost all, entire communities whose souls have been violated and which must find a way of hope in the midst of great brokenness and loss.

But is there an answer to the President’s question, “Why?” Is it true that the release of such forces is completely “beyond our power to control?” We believe it can be presumptuous to too quickly assume to answer such questions. However, it might be folly also to ignore them. As we continue in hearts of compassion, we must as Believers at the same time seek to hear what the One who “creates the wind” (Amos 4:13), who “makes wind His messengers” (Ps. 104:4)—including “stormy winds that do His bidding” (Ps. 148:8)—may be seeking to speak to communicate in these storms, specifically the mighty “whirlwinds” which have been unleashed in an unprecedented way during recent weeks.

We would suggest that a clue may be found in a passage from the *Book of Job*. . What follows is one possible interpretation of what is taking place in the passage between Job 35:5 and 38:1. Except for his life, Job has lost almost everything—health, wealth, family (this last in a violent wind (1:18-19) seemingly released by Satan himself). After three friends have reasoned with him for days, seeking to explain the cause behind his calamities, a young man named Elihu, who has been sitting quietly by, can wait no longer and begins vigorously expressing his own thoughts (Chs. 32-37). Afterwards, many of the reasonings of the first three friends will be rebuked by God; but regarding Elihu, He will remain silent).

Midway through his discourse, it is as though things begin happening in the heavens over Elihu and Job, and the young man masterfully and spontaneously draws these into his argument. In 35:5 he calls Job to *“look to the heavens and see; behold the clouds...”* By 36:27 it is beginning to rain, *“He draws up drops of water, which distill as rain from the mist, which the clouds drop down and pour abundantly on man.”* Movement begins to take place in the sky and he speaks of

the “*spreading of the clouds*” and the thunder (29), of lightning and “*the rising storm*” (32-33). Something is building—by 37:1 his heart “*trembles and leaps from its place*” at the “*thunder of His voice, and the rumbling that comes from His mouth...under the whole heaven, His lightning to the ends of the earth!*” And now there is a Roar (**We would point out in passing that this “roaring” of the voice at the beginning of 37:4 is the same Hebrew word as that used in Amos 3:8—“A lion has roared! Who will not fear? Adonai YHVH has spoken! Who can but prophecy?!”**). As Elihu shouts out the different ways in which God releases His hand in the moving of the elements over the earth, the thunder and roaring intensify (37:4-7); animals scurry away into their dens and lairs (vs 8); and, then—“*from the chamber of the south comes the whirlwind!*” “Whirlwind” here (NKJV) is Hebrew *supha*, which some scholars relate to the word *soph* to mean, “that which brings an end.” It is accompanied by hail...the ice forming (vs 10) and scattered with moisture in the “thick cloud” among the “scattered abroad clouds of His lightening” (vs 11). Finally, vs 12 speaks of this thick cloud as “rotating”—being “turned round about by His guidance” (JPSA translation)—“swirl[ing] about, being turned by His guidance” (NKJV). We would suggest that what is here being described—this “whirlwind”...the “wind which brings an end” ...the thick cloud “swirling about”—may be an actual description of a tornado. Elihu continues to cry out to Job to “*Listen to this...stand still and consider the wondrous works of God!*” Nothing can be said to God at a time like this “*for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness*” and a terror of being “swallowed up”. And then an unspeakable light appears, before which the darkness flees away, “*coming from the north as golden splendor, God in awesome majesty!*” Elihu brings his words quickly to an end; and “**GOD ANSWERED JOB OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND...**” (38:1).

How may we hope to understand what God might sometimes be saying through the release of such a violent “force of nature”? Return to **Job 37:12**. Here, referring specifically to such rotating storms, we are told that they are “***turned by His guidance, that they may do whatever He commands them on the face of the whole earth. He causes it to come, Whether for Correction, Or for His Land, or for Mercy***” (NKJV, our emphases).

1. For “Correction!” The word is *shevet*, which means “a rod”. In Scripture, a rod may have to do with God’s retributive punishment. It is with a “rod of iron” in Psalm 2:9 that the LORD’s Anointed will break the nations which rage, plot and counsel together against Him. But it is also used often with “correction” in mind, “*He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.*” Of Solomon, God promised David, “*I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him...*” (II Samuel 7:14-15a). For David (Psalm 23:4), knowledge of God’s rod, which could be used to nudge a wayward sheep into a right path, came as a comfort.

In the blows which has stricken this part of America during the past week, devastating the good as well as the wicked, are there ways in which God might be releasing a word of correction? For individuals, for regions, for the nation? Might there be discernment released in the Body of Messiah...to sense what He is saying, what is the right way to restoration, what is the right path from here?

2. For “His Land!” It does not say “*The Land*”, but “*His Land*” (Hebrew: *artzo*). While it is true that the land of Israel is never specifically mentioned in the book of Job (and no doubt it was not in Elihu’s mind when he was speaking forth his message), it is also true that where God’s word speaks directly in the possessive of “**His land**”, we must be open to the possibility that it may be applicable by the Holy Spirit to the Land of Covenant where His Son will one day rule the World. This is most certainly the case in Joel 3:2 when He promises to “*enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land.*”

Might something on behalf of Israel be included in what God is trying to say through the devastation which has come upon the very ‘Bible Belt’ of America during this past month? May judgment of correction already be beginning to be released on nations of influence which are seeking to divide up the Land promised to Jacob’s seed (Genesis 28:13-16), insisting that the very area in which God’s promise took place will become (eternally) an independent Muslim state? Might this latest outbreak of storms in part be a severe warning regarding “His Land”, especially to the United States, whose Head of State four days previous had declared to the world that lines imposed on His returned ancient people from 1949 until 1967, lines separating that people from their ancient stewardship and heritage in His Land, should serve as basis for a future border eternally separating them from that heritage and stewardship?

Nor would this be the first time. When any leader compromises their nation’s alignment with God’s purposes for Israel, there is danger that a rent in the canopy of protection over that nation may occur. In May 2005 George W. Bush, the first US President to call for an “Independent Palestinian state living side by side with Israel”, declared in a joint press conference with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas in the Rose Garden that in formation of the new state, mutual agreements between the two sides would center around “changes to the 1949 Armistice lines.” These “1949 Armistice lines” are essentially the same lines which were in place at the outbreak of the 1967 war and to which Mr Obama referred in his speech. On August 15th Israel began pulling the last remnant of Jews out of the Gaza Strip (taken from Egypt in the 1967 war); on August 22 the last Jewish residents were expelled and the 38-year-long Israeli presence there came to an end. The next day, August 23rd, Hurricane Katrina began forming over the Bahamas, and on May 26th, 2005...after crossing Florida and regaining strength in the Gulf of Mexico, it slammed into New Orleans. It was the costliest natural disaster as well as being one of the five deadliest (over 1,836 casualties) in the history of the United States.

3. Or for “Mercy!” It is God’s will that the mighty elements described in Job release rains which nourish and bring forth life on the earth. The Hebrew word is *hesid*, often translated “lovingkindness”. Psalm 89:14 tells us that “*righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne, lovingkindness and truth go before Him.*” It is His desire that the earth and those in it be filled with this lovingkindness (Psalm 33:5). But His *hesid* can only exist in conjunction with *emet*—truth (“*In Your majesty ride on victoriously, for the cause of truth...*” Psalm 45:4). Many times in the Hebrew Bible lovingkindness and truth are coupled together; the two cannot be separated. Ultimately, Yeshua Himself is described as being God’s gift of Lovingkindness and

Truth to the world (John 1:17). It is His kindness, even when severe, which leads us to repentance, so that we may partake of that gift.

May this be a time, in which people even in the midst of the anguish and loss of what has taken place through the storms, become aware of and be drawn to the lovingkindness of God. “Your lovingkindness, O LORD, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness to the clouds...Your judgments are a great deep, O LORD, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings” (Psalm 36:5-7a).

“ROD OF CORRECTION—HIS LAND---LOVINGKINDNESS”

As a prophetic application of this passage, we see Israel standing as a dividing line between God’s Rod and His Lovingkindness.

This last Tuesday a large segment of the present US government appeared to choose to stand up on behalf of Israel, to the right of the “dividing line”. On Tuesday P.M. Benjamin Netanyahu gave a strong address before the joint houses of Congress, stating that “Israel will not return to the indefensible boundaries of 1967”. He vowed that Jerusalem would remain Israel’s undivided capital. He called the West Bank the Palestinians’ homeland, but rejected the idea that it belonged to them alone, *“In Judea and Samaria, the Jewish people are not foreign occupiers. This is the land of our forefathers, the land of Israel to which Abraham brought the idea of one God.”* As one Reuters journalist opined, “The overall importance of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s speech...was not in the substance—he did not break any radical new ground—but rather in the overwhelmingly warm ovation he received” (Herb Keinon: “Analysis: Applause heard in White House, around world”; *The Jerusalem Post* (JPOST.com), 12:26 IST, May 25, 2011). Upon entering the chamber, the Prime Minister received a four-minute ovation, and during his speech, he was applauded some 30 times, often accompanied by standing ovations. Even his wife Sara received a standing ovation when she entered the hall. ***“With the resounding applause, on both sides of the aisle, to Netanyahu’s comments on a unified Jerusalem, not returning to the 1967 lines, not negotiating with Hamas, not allowing the descendants of Palestinian refugees to enter Israel, Obama-currently tending to US business in Europe—received a clear signal from Congress that when it comes to Israel, his hands are not free”*** (Ibid.).

And not the United States Congress alone. Within a week Canadian Prime Minister Harper stood his ground at the G-8 meeting in France, forcing the other seven members not to follow the American President’s lead by mentioning Israel’s “1967 borders” in a statement they made on the Middle East, even though most of the members were in favour of a mention.

PLEASE PRAY:

***For grace to hear and understand what God is saying when He is speaking in the storms and fluctuations of weather which are increasing on the earth. When it is the “rod”, to have humility and courage to rise up in repentance and a change of heart; when it relates**

to Israel to have revelation and understanding; when lovingkindness is offered, to long for and embrace it in the fear of the Lord (Psalm 33:18).

***Mercy, hope and restoration to those who innocently suffer because of the mistakes of their leaders.**

***Protection over Israel on June 1st, Jerusalem...as she celebrates the 44th anniversary of her victory in the Six Day War and the Reunification of Jerusalem.**

THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION:

From ancient times there has been a weekly portion (*Parashah*) from the first five books of Moses (The *Torah*) and an ending (*Haftarah*) from the Prophets read on the Sabbath in synagogues around the world. This portion is given a Hebrew name drawn from the opening words of the Torah passage. An illustration of this practice appears to have been recorded in Luke 4:16 where Yeshua (Jesus) arrived in the synagogue in Nazareth and was asked to read the portion (Isaiah 61) from the Prophets. We have found that in perusing these weekly readings, not only are we provided opportunity to identify in the context of God's Word with millions of Jewish people around the world, but very often the Holy Spirit will illumine specific passages pertinent that week in our intercession for the Land and people of Israel. All texts are those of English translations of the Scriptures.

The reading for this week May 29 May—4 June 2011 is *Naso*: “Raise up” heads (i.e. Take a census)

TORAH: Numbers 4:21—7:89

HAFTARAH: Judges 13:2-25

***Numbers 6:22-27.** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, “This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:*

‘YHVH bless you and guard you

YHVH make His face shine upon you and grace you

YHVH lift up His face to you and give you Shalom.’

“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

With this blessing the LORD's holy name YHVH was placed over the Israelites by the priests as a covering and protection. No other name would have true power to bless them, to be their guard and keeper, to release grace upon them, or to guard their hearts and minds with true *shalom*. Twice this blessing refers to the LORD's *face*. The absolute necessity of being in the

light of that face permeates the Hebrew Bible from beginning to end. Without God's face (sometimes in English translated 'presence') Moses prayed to God not to bring himself and the people up to the Promised Land (Exodus 33:14-15). Three times in Psalm 80 the minstrel Asaph equates God's causing His face to shine on Israel with "salvation", while in Psalm 44:3 the sons of Korah attribute Israel's winning of the Land to YHVH's "right hand, His arm, and the light of His face, because he loved them". There is a voice, sang David, crying out within every man, "Seek My face"...and his response, whenever He recognized it, would be "Your face, LORD, I will seek...do not hide Your face from me" (Psalm 27:8).

So this was the blessing which would attend the Children of Israel when the LORD placed His name YHVH over them. Today Israel has lost the pronunciation of that Name; when the blessing is recited, it is replaced by *Adonai* (lord/master). However, it is hidden within the original Hebrew name for Jesus. *Yeshua*, a contraction for *Yehoshua*, means *YHVH Saves!* *He* is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word" (Hebrews 1:3). *He* is *Sar Shalom*...the Prince of Peace. **As members of a Holy Priesthood (Rev. 1:6), we would encourage you to pray this blessing over the Jewish people, placing *The Name* conjoined with *Salvation*—Yeshua—over them. Pray for the veil to be removed from Jewish eyes through the power of the Holy Spirit that they may know their LORD face-to-face. "And I will not hide my face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out my Spirit on the house of Israel," says Adonai YHVH—the Lord GOD" (Ezekiel 39:29).**

Judges 13:6. "A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome..."** In this recounting of the coming of the angel/messenger of God to Manoah's wife to herald the conception of Samson, at least five times he is referred to as a 'man'. Two of those times he is called a "Man of God"...which, interestingly, could just as easily be translated from the Hebrew "The God-Man" (*Ish ha-Elohim*). Later in the story he refuses to give his name, since it is 'wonderful'—and at the end Manoah is convinced that he and his wife must die, "because we have seen God." Of course, at this time Yeshua/Jesus had not yet taken on human flesh. But it appears, nonetheless, to be an instance of a pre-incarnate manifestation of the One who was to come. **PLEASE PRAY for the understanding of Jews who read or hear these words next weekend to be opened, that they may comprehend the identity of the *One* who came to Manoah and his wife and ascended in the flame—of the *One* who was seated on the throne of the chariot in the Ezekiel passage—of the *One* who came down in flame onto the mountain in Exodus 19 (Luke 24:44-45)—of the *One* who has come in the flesh once before, and *Who is coming again!



*Martin and Norma Sarvis
Jerusalem*

[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 5-11 June will be B'ha'alotcha—"Light up" the lamps : TORAH: 8:1—12:16; HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:10—4:7. SHAVUOT/PENTECOST (June 8): TORAH: Exodus 19-20, Numbers 28;26-31; HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 1:1-28, 3:12.]

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